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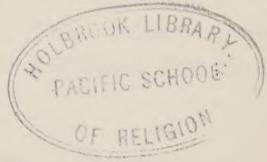
the WORLD ALLIANCE for INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP THROUGH THE CHURCHES

the WORLD ALLIANCE of YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS

the WORLD'S YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

the WORLD'S STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION

the WORLD'S SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION



The aim of the Ecumenical Press Service is to keep its readers informed of trends of thought and opinion in and about the Churches and Christian movements. It is therefore not to be held responsible for opinions expressed in its news items.

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September 19, 1947

GREAT BRITAIN

Resettlement of Displaced Persons

The Ecumenical Refugee Commission of the World Council of Churches (E.R.C.) is cooperating with the British Ministry of Labour in the European Voluntary Workers scheme for resettling many thousands of Displaced Persons in Great Britain.

The Commission in association with the British Council of Churches has been made responsible for the spiritual care and welfare of all workers of the Protestant and Eastern Orthodox faiths. A small group will visit Britain in September and remain there for a fortnight as the guests of E.R.C. They will visit the Holiday Camps and return to Germany to report their observations. A more important plan will operate in the Autumn when a larger group of six or eight pastors will come to Britain on indefinite attachment to the E.R.C. and will act as an advisory and consultative committee on the spiritual welfare of resettled refugees.

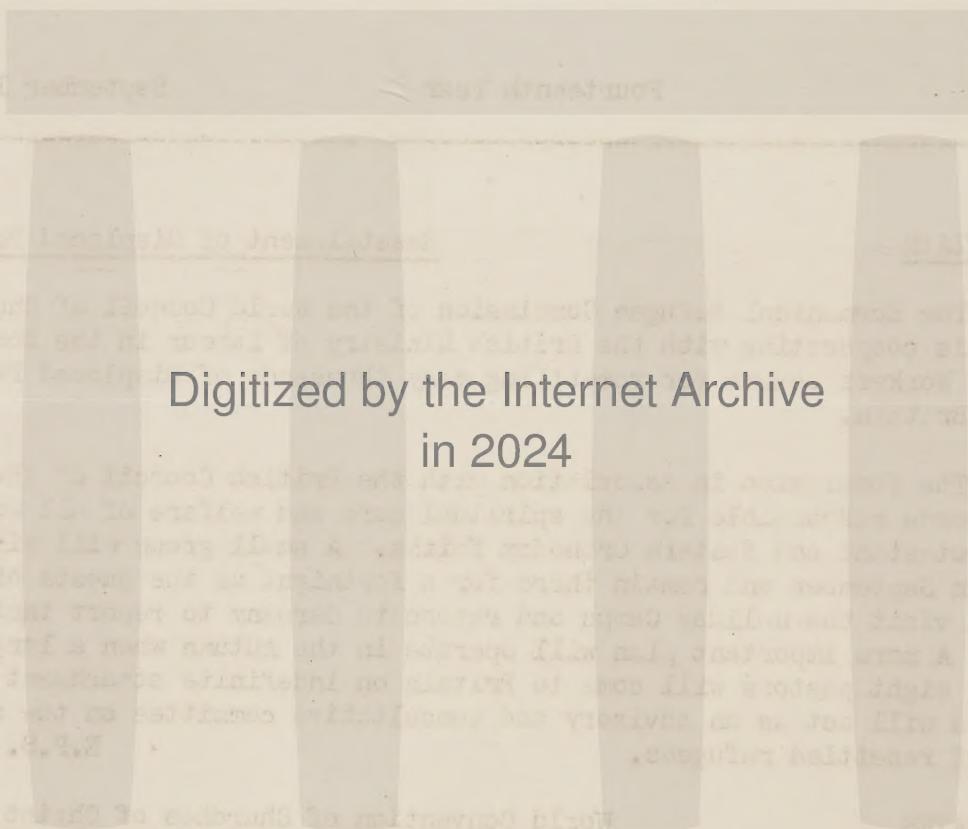
E.P.S. Geneva

UNITED STATES

World Convention of Churches of Christ

At the beginning of August the World Convention of Churches of Christ (Disciples) met at Buffalo (N.Y.). This Conference issued a statement expressing the following basic beliefs:

"The acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour is the sole affirmation of faith necessary to the Fellowship of Christians. The New Testament is the primary source of our knowledge concerning the Will of God and the revelation of God in Christ, and is the authoritative Scripture by which the Will of God is conveyed to men. Each local church is under Christ a self-governing unit; organisation and agencies are in no sense governing bodies but may be useful instruments in carrying on Christian work and in fostering and expressing fellowship; likewise congregations and individuals have the inherent right to initiate and carry on Christian work through directly supported enterprises without breach of the wider fellowship, and the unity of the whole Church in faith, fellowship and service is to be earnestly sought.



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"In the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ as the message of salvation to the affection and intelligence of men, we have found our largest unity. The great commission demands that to make this "One World" we must first make it God's World, by the universal acceptance of Christ as Saviour. This acceptance of Christ can be attained only by the recovery of the apostolic passion for the proclamation of the message, the method being incidental.

'That the world may be saved', is our only hope of unity. The message of salvation in Christ is the sole task of the Church. The unity of Christians which was the aim and prayer of our Lord, with Christ Himself the centre of that unity, by the restoration of New Testament Christianity, is necessary to the realisation of God's design for human redemption. Their historical position has given them practical insight into the New Testament fellowship which they desire to share with all members of the divided Body of Christ."

In his message George H. Stewart of Winnipeg, President of the World Convention of Churches of Christ, stressed the need of "an increase of the effectiveness in the ecumenical movement, especially through the World Council of Churches and similar organisations within our separate countries."

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CEYLON

Proposed Scheme of Church Union

There are in Ceylon five major non-Roman Churches - Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist and Congregationalist - and the negotiation for church union includes all these five Churches.

These five Churches between them represent a Christian community which is barely 1% of the total population in Ceylon. The Negotiating Committee has finished the first part of its work and issued a report that is a complete draft of the Section on Faith and Order. The Churches have been asked now to express themselves definitely on this section on Faith and Order.

It is hoped that the Churches could give their final word on this by the end of 1948, for before then there would have been held the Lambeth Conference as well as the annual meetings of the British Methodist Conference, the Baptist Convention, etc.

The Ceylon Scheme provides for a unification of the ministries of the uniting Churches from the very beginning, and in matters of faith and order it accepts the system of voting by houses.

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NEW ZEALAND

Maori Section of the National Council of Churches

The first official meetings of the Maori Section of the National Council of Churches took place in Rotorua on July 10 and 11. But the idea of having such a section to facilitate closer cooperation between the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian parts of the Maori Church was one of the products of the Christchurch Conference of 1945. A representative group of people - Maori and Pakehu (European) - had laboured to prepare what is now regarded as one of the most valuable of the Christchurch reports, on the Maori people. Among other suggestions was the idea of a Maori section in the National Council of Churches.

The Maori Section actually includes the total membership of the three constituent Churches, and the Executive is composed of seven Anglicans, four Methodists and three Presbyterians. The constitution has been approved by these three Churches as well as by the National Council of Churches. The Maori Section serves the same purposes among the Maori Churches as the National Council of Churches for the whole of the Churches. The Chairman is the Maori Bishop Bennett.

The Rotorua meeting came immediately to grips with the real issues. Their first serious act was to set up a most responsible commission to bring a report to the next meeting with suggestions as to ways and means by which the work of evangelisation among the Maori people may be forwarded, and in particular how the Churches can cooperate in this central task. Other matters taken up for study were the revival of the use of the Maori language, the provision of a satisfying life for Maori rural workers, the countering of the dangers of the present drift to the cities, the relation of the Christian view of marriage to certain traditional Maori marriage customs, the matter of temperance, and the production of an effective Maori newspaper.

The ecumenical spirit was accompanied by a truly ecumenical vision. It was not concerned only with Maori matters. The Maori people, increasingly coming to maturity as a Christian Church, are seeking more direct representation on the National Council of Churches. Furthermore they have a genuine interest in the whole sphere of Pacific matters and will participate in the South Pacific Christian Conference. And when they discussed their own problems of evangelism, they asked not only for the assistance of the National Council of Churches, but also of the World Council of Churches. E.P.S. Geneva

ITALY

Synod of the Waldensian Church

On September 1st the Synod of the Waldensian Church held its inauguration ceremony. The Chairman on this occasion was Professor Ernesto Comba and five candidates were consecrated for the ministry. There were many important questions on the agenda.

The Church proposed to achieve the three following objects: (a) State neutrality with regard to religion; (b) freedom of conscience and personal equality before the law for non-Catholic citizens; (c) legal equality of religious services.

Of these three objects, the second is the only one which has been achieved (freedom of conscience and personal equality). The third object may still be partly achieved by means of the law which is to regulate the definite position of Evangelical institutions under the new Constitution. This is what the Waldensian Church and the other Evangelical Churches in Italy are striving to achieve through the Commission appointed by the Federal Council of Churches.

The United Methodist Church (see E.P.S. No. 24, 1946) again brought up the plan for union with the Waldensian Church, and asked the Waldensian Synod to explain its confession of faith (which is in accordance with that of La Rochelle) and to say what the united Church should be called. The Synod replied to the first question by reassuring the Methodist Church about the freedom already enjoyed by the theological tendencies represented by Methodism

within the Waldensian Church. As to the name of the united Church, the Synod reminded the Methodist Church of the ecumenical value of the name of the Waldensian Church which represents both the pre-Reformation evangelical protest and the lay missionary spirit common to both Churches.

In many towns pastors have been able to preside over large popular meetings of evangelism, in theatres or in public squares, and the audience seemed very impressed by the positive Christian witness contained in their message. In order to take advantage of this exceptional opportunity of spreading the Christian message, a definite programme must be drawn up, and the Synod appointed a Commission to prepare it. It also gave its approval to the establishment of a permanent camp in the mountains (the "Agape Village") - a plan carried out on the initiative of the Federation of Waldensian Unions.

The Synod re-appointed the present Moderator, Pastor Virgilio Sommani, for the next year. At a public meeting at the Church of Torre Pellice the delegates from the sister Churches and from the World Council brought fraternal greetings from their respective congregations.

E.P.S. Geneva

DENMARK

"Indre Mission" Enters a New Phase of

Development

According to the Church Service (Copenhagen), it has always been characteristic of the "Indre Mission (Home Mission) - the revivalist movement within the Danish Church - that it has been unsympathetic towards political and national matters and has concentrated its energies exclusively on the salvation of the individual. This policy was laid down last century by the founder of the movement Pastor Wilhem Beck, and this pietistic attitude - firm rejection of "the world" and everything pertaining to it - has since been predominant in "Indre Mission".

A change has now been introduced; the present President of "Indre Mission", Pastor Christian Bartholdy, has openly broken away from the old policy. Pastor Bartholdy has declared that the situation confronting the Church today is of a different nature from the one existing when the movement was founded, and that the old slogans and the old views are therefore no longer adequate. "We are facing a new turn of the tide", Pastor Bartholdy said. "Previously the issue was the Second and Third Articles of the Creed, but today the fight centres around the First Article, around God. Large sections of the Danish nation no longer believe that God exists or that He created us. But belief in God is closely connected with belief that God created man, and therefore we cannot turn our backs on our nation in its struggles, its social, political, pedagogical, and national problems and regard it all as something only of 'this world' with which we may have no dealings. We must go out among our people and cooperate with them in all their undertakings so that our nation may be saved from perdition and gain salvation."

E.P.S. Geneva

GERMANY

A Letter From the Fraternal Council

At its last session in Darmstadt held on August 8, 1947, the Fraternal Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (E.K.D.) sent the following letter to the pastors and Fraternal Councils of the Confessing Church:

"Dear Brethren, the Church Assembly held at Treysa in 1947 has emphatically confirmed the fellowship entrusted to us in the German Evangelical Church (E.K.D.). As the Evangelical Church, recognising and preserving our confessional characteristics and decisions, we have to take up and carry out in this community the task entrusted to Christ's followers. We recognise the expression of this desire at Treysa as a step forward in the path of the Confessing Church.

This fellowship in service does not mean that any of us are no longer responsible for our particular confession, but it prevents us from withdrawing into our own confessional basis; it lays upon us the duty of rallying round the Word of God, and from that position listening and speaking to the brethren in the other confessions.

We must therefore trust ourselves simply to the guidance of God's Word, and take care not to evolve our own plans of organisation in church-politics, which would prevent us from hearing God's message to His whole people. We should run into this danger if we were to try and meet the development of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) - see E.P.S. No. 16 - or of an Eastern German Church with group formations, instead of in genuine fraternal discussion. We should lay ourselves open to the temptation not to trust ourselves to God's Word but to considerations of church-politics and of politics in general.

As a Confessing Church we are called to take up obediently those tasks which are entrusted to us, but not those which are of our own seeking; in this way we shall avoid being found unfaithful servants. The tasks entrusted to us are so many and so extensive that we have not yet come near to fulfilling them. Within the Christian community, and all around us, we are met by so much envy and resentment, ill-will and hatred, despondency and despair, all of which calls for the guiding and healing Word of the Living God. But to whom is this Word given and where is it preached? Here lies the great task of the Christian Church as a whole. We will stand together in this task as a Confessing Church, instead of losing ourselves in ways of our own choosing which are bound to divide us. We must all pray for this great need. We will venture together in faith to attempt this task. For there is only one Church unity, namely the unity given in God's Word and revealed in Jesus Christ, the Word become flesh, Whom we confessed at Barmen. It is better to neglect everything else, than to neglect the Word of God!"

E.P.S. Geneva

UNITED STATES

European Theological Students in USA Faculties

Thirty young European pastors will be going to America this Autumn to start a year's graduate study in preparation for the type of Christian leadership that will help reconstruct Church and community life in their native countries. They are going to the U.S.A. as part of a project organised by the American Churches and coordinated through Church World Service. The inter-denominational relief and reconstruction agency paid their trans-ocean passage, whereas the theological schools in which they are enrolled will provide their educational expenses. The students were selected by interdenominational reconstruction committees in different European countries. The student programme in Europe is supervised by the Reconstruction Department of the World Council of Churches, which has awarded 171 scholarships in the post-war period.

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